

INFORMATION ABOUT EARLY FIRST TRIMESTER SCAN (BEFORE 11 WEEKS)

What is an ultrasound scan?

Ultrasound scanning is an imaging technique allowing the visualization of parts of the body by using high-frequency sound waves (ultrasound, not audible by human ear) able to go through the tissues. When the sound waves reach the fetus, echoes are produced and transformed into images on the ultrasound machine screen.

How is the early pregnancy scan performed?

The early pregnancy ultrasound scan is preferably performed transvaginally, like a gynecological scan, introducing into the vagina a thin probe with a disposable cover. It is usually a painless procedure (occasionally it might cause mild discomfort) with no side effects.

Is the ultrasound scan safe for the fetus?

Ultrasound has been used in obstetric practice for over thirty years and no harmful effects on the fetus, including long term, have been reported. For this reason, with the current procedures, the diagnostic use of ultrasound is considered safe during pregnancy. Before 10 weeks of gestation, it is recommended to not use Doppler for heartbeat detection.

Why is the early first trimester scan advised?

Maternal symptoms such as vaginal bleeding and/or pelvic pain are specific indications to the early first trimester scan. However, it is also recommended for all pregnancies, even in absence of specific indications, in order to define the number of the fetuses, their viability, the intrauterine location of the embryo/fetus and its correspondence with the gestational age (ultrasound pregnancy dating).

What can be assessed by an early first trimester scan, in addition to pregnancy dating?

As mentioned before, the early first trimester scan can detect a multiple pregnancy, a spontaneous miscarriage, an abnormal pregnancy location (e.g., an ectopic pregnancy), uterine or adnexal abnormalities. Some conditions, such as ectopic pregnancy and spontaneous miscarriage, can only be suspected at early stages, possibly requiring further follow-up scans and/or laboratory tests. In case of multiple pregnancies, the number of amniotic sacs (amnionicity) and the number of placentas (chorionicity) should be also assessed.

Can all pregnancy conditions be excluded by the early first trimester scan?

The early pregnancy scan cannot exclude pregnancy conditions, other than what already stated. Moreover, the diagnosis of first trimester conditions is not always possible at the first ultrasound evaluation, with suboptimal detection rates for few of such conditions (e.g. ectopic pregnancy).

INFORMED CONSENT TO EARLY FIRST TRIMESTER SCAN

I hereby (name, surname) _____ declare that:

- I have been correctly informed about the early first trimester scan and understood the contents of this information.
- I had the opportunity of clarifying my doubts with a doctor and all my questions were satisfactorily answered.
- I am aware that this examination is suggested but not mandatory and I would like to undergo the examination aware that the early first trimester scan might identify pregnancy conditions requiring further diagnostic examinations.

Date

Patient's signature